

POETRY INCARNATION '05

Opening remarks

Adam Fieled

July 5, 2005, the Khyber

It's my humble opinion that Philadelphia is ready to take its' place among the great cities of the world. Many define us by our proximity to Manhattan; an easy mistake to make. After all, Manhattan is widely acknowledged as perhaps the world's greatest city. Over years of shuttling back and forth, I've learned to love Philly and Manhattan equally, for different reasons. The exuberant excess of Manhattan is intoxicating but exhausting. Philly is a "Middle Path" town, and if it doesn't stagger us w/ raw velocity, we're able to function here without exhaustion. Manhattan is glamorous but expensive. Philly is short on glamour, long on substance, and we can live here without going bankrupt. Ultimately, Philly and New York are sister cities, with much more in common than not. East Coast, liberal, each w/ its' own Ivy League school, cynical, earthy, brutal summers, brutal winters, gorgeous springs & falls, great art museums, architecture, wonderful pungent neighborhoods.

So the tale of the Philly Free School is becoming a tale of two cities. The specter of a third hangs over the whole endeavor—London. From '64 to '70, London swung harder than any other city in recent memory. How could it not, with Lennon, Hendrix, Jagger, Burroughs, Ginsberg, Genet, Hockney, Bacon, and Godard hanging from the rafters. The Philly Free School inherited its' name from the London Free School, who were perhaps the first multi-media artists' co-op ever. The London Free School made stars out of Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd, promoted poets like Alex Trocchi, turned churches into psychedelic cathedrals. They introduced the "light show" in 1966 when the Beatles were still singing "Yellow Submarine". Thus, the Philly Free School has a lot to live up to, and we wouldn't want it any other way.

We don't merely want to recreate Swinging London. We want to create an analogous environment with Philly & New York artists right now. We want Philly & New York to join together in song, poem, and story, to break new ground and start a new chapter of reciprocity & encouragement between these two great cities. We're gathered here tonight to help inaugurate this endeavor. "Poetry Incarnation" at the Royal Albert Hall in London, 1965, introduced Ginsberg & Corso into an already fertile, volatile mix. Who knows who among you might be a Ginsberg or a Corso? Even if you don't happen to be Allen Ginsberg, you still deserve a time & place to "Howl". The Philly Free School exists so that anyone who wants a forum by which to express anything can do so. That was the belief that inspired the original "Poetry Incarnation", and that's the belief that spurred us into creating "Poetry Incarnation '05".

What's in the future for the Philly Free School? The possibilities seem limitless. How many fledgling artists are there in Philly & New York? Tons! Many of them are talented, too. It's our purpose and our mission to cross genre-zones and find the poets, musicians, painters, film-makers, novelists, and performance artists who are taking the right risks, shaking up the right conventions, assaulting the right boundaries, cracking the right codes. We have the grandiose ambition to rock NYC & Philly so hard that a baby is born between them. A love-child that knows how to swing; a freedom-child that knows how to Howl. We're going out into the world with that passion in our soul, and we want you to join us! Welcome to "Poetry Incarnation '05".